

APPENDIX

History of Railway Network in Bengal

Bengal was crisscrossed by nearly eight thousand miles of railways until 1947. Initially, the East Indian Railway company (EIR) spearheaded the construction of these lines, but later, numerous other companies joined the endeavor. Here is a concise overview of railway construction in Bengal to understand the multifaceted impacts on the region.

A. State Railways:

The State railway was again classified under three heads: (a) Provincial State. (b) Imperial State and (c) Native State Railways. The Provincial State owned railway companies involved in the construction are: East Indian Railway (EIR), Bengal Central Railway(BCR), Eastern Bengal Railway(EBR), Assam-Bengal Railway(ABR), Bengal-Nagpur Railway(BNR).

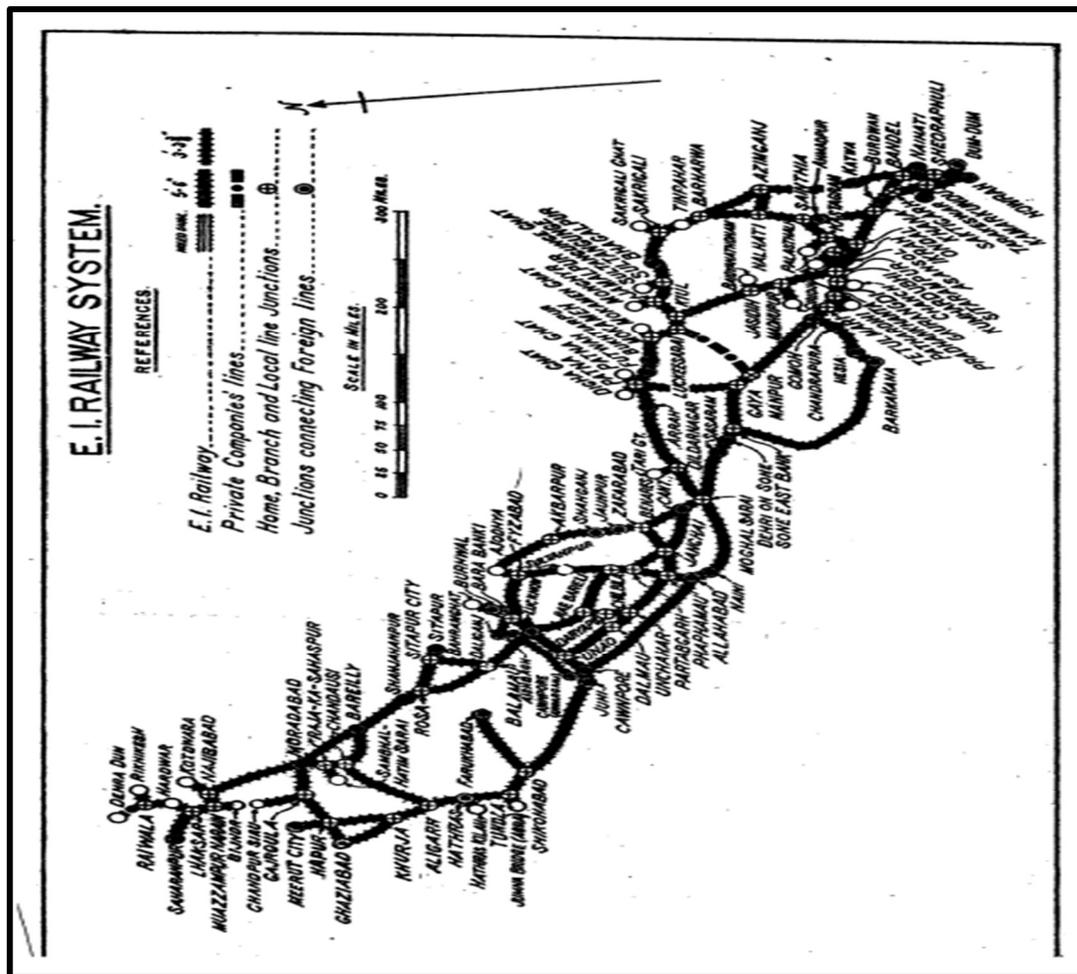
A.1 Among these EIR was the most significant company to build the railway lines in Bengal. On 15th August 1854, the first section of East Indian Railway from Howrah to Hooghly was opened for passengers.¹

As of 1869, 1353 miles were commissioned under EIR out of which 203 miles were double lines. In the year 1879, East Indian Railway was purchased by the state. In 1887, connection between EIR and EBR was completed by means of construction of railway bridge over Hoogly river.² Until

¹ Huddleston, C. I. E. (1906). *History of East Indian Railway*. Calcutta: Tacker, Spink and Co., p. 14

² Sanyal, N. (1930). *Development of Indian Railways*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, p. 19

the takeover by the British Indian Government on 1st June, 1905, East India Railway Company connected eastern Bengal to Delhi via Patna with so many criss-cross branch lines.



Source: History of Indian Railway, Constructed and in Progress Corrected up to 31st March 1945. Government of India, Railway Department, Printed by the manager, Government of India Press, Simla, 1945

A.2 Eastern Bengal Railway:

EBR was another important company to connect western part of Bengal to the Eastern part. In the year 1855 Eastern Bengal Railway Company was formed.³ In September, 1862 the line extended up to Ranaghat from Sealdaha and by 1871 E.B.R. had reached with its construction up to the western banks of the Padma and established railheads at Kushtia (Nadia) and Goalando.

(Faridpur). In the year 1884, Eastern Bengal Railway was acquired by the state and amalgamated the lines with the Northern Bengal and Calcutta and South Eastern State railways.⁴

³ *Statistical Abstract relating to British India from 1840 to 1865* (First number). p.27

⁴ p.184

Source: History of Indian Railway, Constructed and in Progress Corrected up to 31st March 1937. Government of India, Railway Department, Printed by the manager, Government of India Press Simla, 1938

As the map, mentioned above, shows the railway construction under Eastern Bengal Railways which connected Kolkata with north and eastern part of Bengal. The line extended from Sealdaha to Ranaghat, Ranaghat to Lalgola; Ranaghat to Abdulpur and the line extended upto Purnea. From Abdulpur another line extended upto Siliguri via Parvatipur. Other two lines extended upto Jainti and extended upto Rangapara. In addition, there are so many small lines like Bongao to Khulna, Mymensing to Narayanganj were built by EBR. Upto 1940 the total length under EBR was 2,007.84 miles.⁵

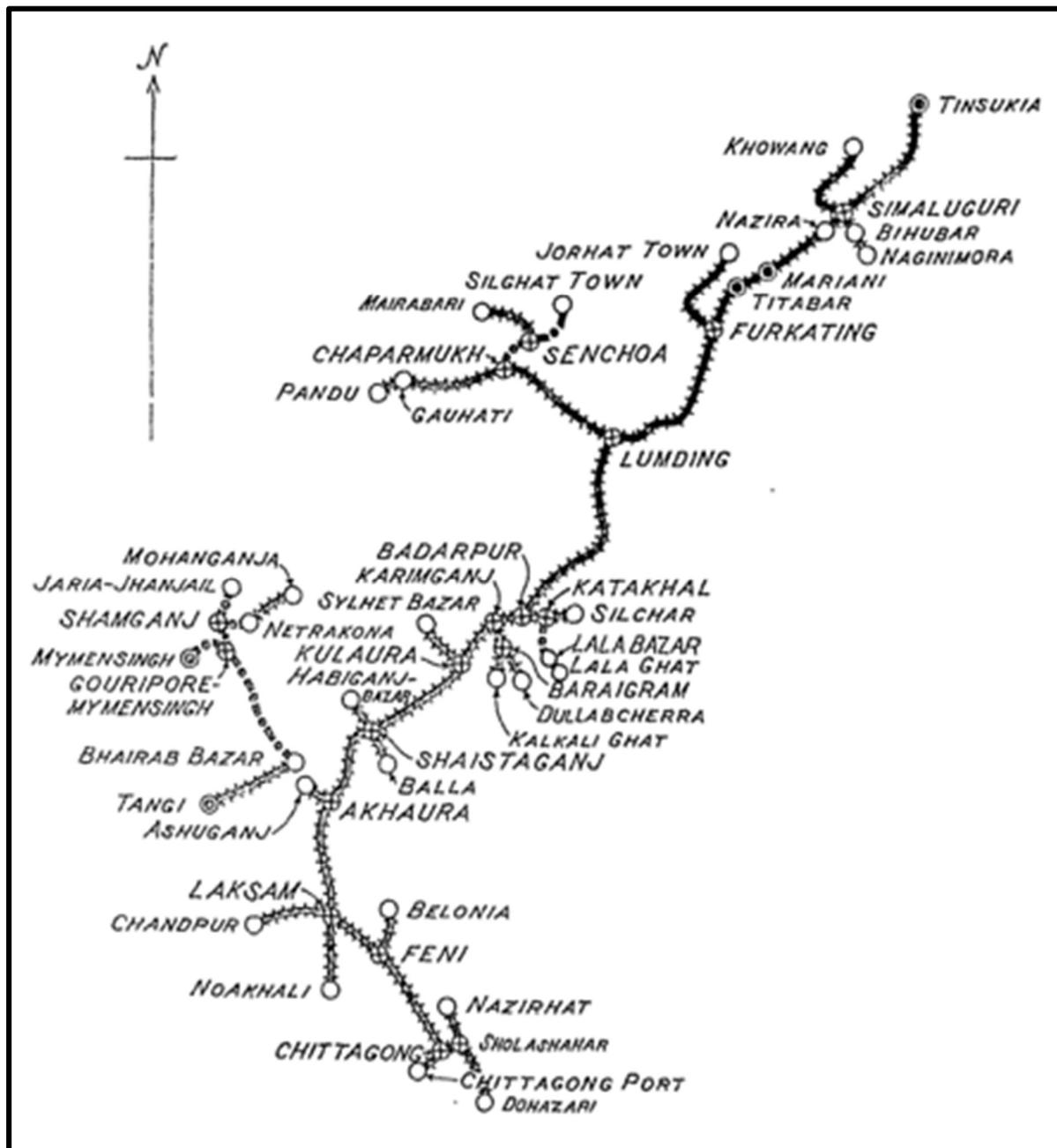
A.3 The Assam Bengal Railway:

The Assam Bengal Railway started building railway tracks in Bengal's east in 1891. A 193.21 miles stretch of rail between Comilla and Chittagong was opened to automobile traffic in 1895. The Comilla–Akhaura–khulna–Bahadurpur route was opened in 1896–1898. It was extended to Kumding in 1903. The ABR extended its line to Guwahati in 1900, linking the city to the eastern line. The line was extended to Tinsukia in 1902, and it was connected to the Dibru-Sadiya Railway in 1903. In 1942, the Eastern Bengal Railway and the ABR merged. A total of 1306.30 miles of mileage were opened under ABR up to 1940. To transport the majority of trade and traffic in the areas east of Assam, a connection was established with Chittagong. Chittagong and Assam were connected to handle the majority of the district's eastward-facing trade and traffic. Betel nuts, gur, gunny bags, skins, mats, oilseeds, country cloth, and chillies were among the minor exports. Chittagong was the source of the cotton. The Assam-Bengal Railway's construction has made it the obvious conduit for trade between Assam and a portion of Eastern Bengal.

⁵ *Statistical Abstract for British India, 1930-31 to 1939-40*, London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, p 649

REFERENCES.

- A. B. Railway.....  3'-3 1/2"
- Private Companies' lines..... 
- Home, Branch and Local line Junctions..... 
- Junctions connecting Foreign lines..... 

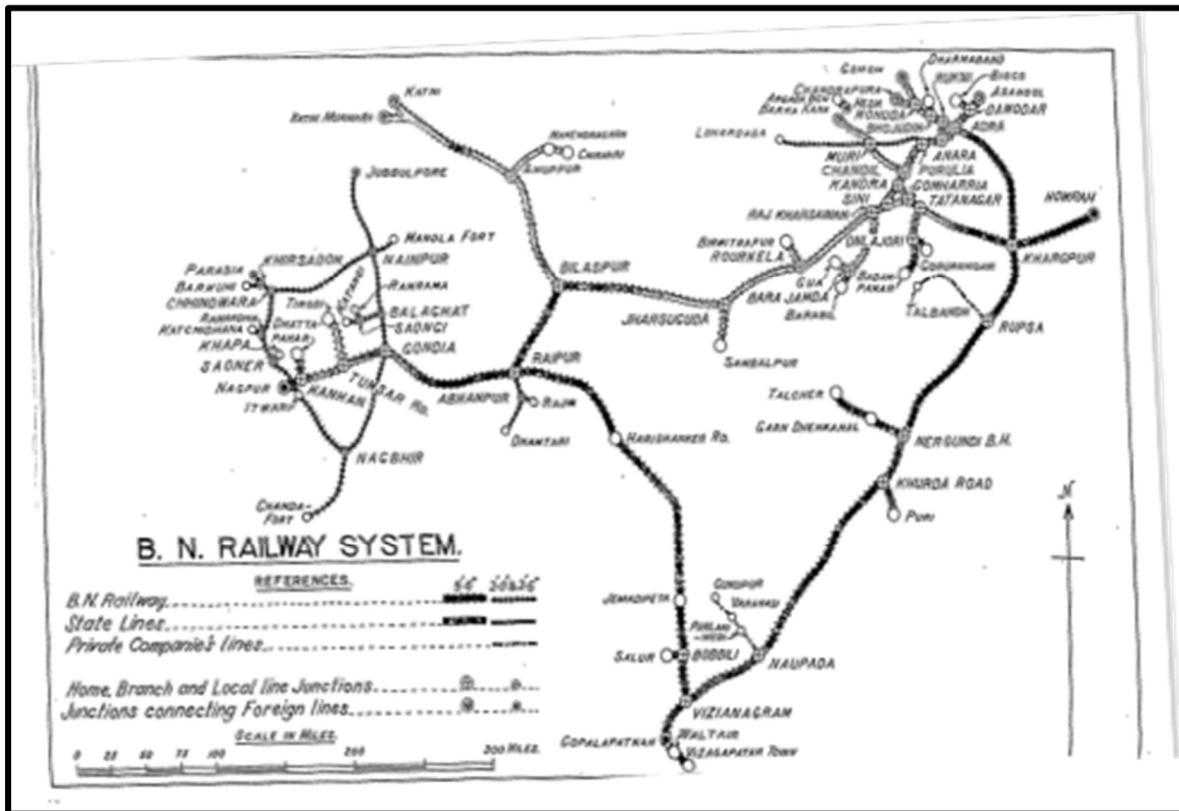


Source: History of Indian Railway, Constructed and in Progress Corrected up to 31st March 1937. Government of India, Railway Department, Printed by the manager, Government of India Press Simla, 1938

A.4 Bengal Nagpur Railway:

The Bengal Nagpur Railway Company was another important company to connect Bengal with the southern part of Bengal. The Bengal Nagpore Company was formed in the year 1887⁶. Till 1902, a total 1627 miles of Railway track was completed by the Bengal In order to connect India's eastern and central areas, this railway network was crucial. Its main purpose when it was founded was to move coal from Chhattisgarh's coalfields to Kolkata, or Calcutta as it was known. Eventually, the railway became an important commerce route as it expanded its network to include important towns like Howrah, Nagpur, Asansol, and Bilaspur of Chattisharh. A total of 3,393.21 miles were opened under BNR up till 1940.

⁶ Sanyal, N. (1930). *Development of Indian Railways*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, p.152



Source: History of Indian Railway, Constructed and in Progress Corrected up to 31st March 1937. Government of India, Railway Department, Printed by the manager, Government of India Press Simla, 1938

A.6 Bengal Central Railway:

In 1881, The Bengal-Central Railway Company was formed in London for the construction of railway lines in the lower Gangetic delta area as surveyed in 1811-78.⁷ The Company built two broad gauge lines, one extending 21 miles (33 km) from Ranaghat to Bangoan and the other 108 miles (172 km) from Dum Dum to Khulna via Bangoan. Both lines were partially operational when

⁷Sanyal, N. (1930). *Development of Indian Railways*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, P. 140

they opened in October 1882 and 1884, respectively. The BCR was amalgamated into the Eastern Bengal State Railway (EBR) in 1904-5 in order to ensure better administration. Till 1902, a total 125 miles of Railway track was completed by the Bengal Central Railway.⁸

B. Assisted Companies:

There were so many metre gauge and narrow gauge lines built under assisted Companies. Among them companies who were significant were Bengal & North-Western Company (1885), Bengal Doers, Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, Howrah –Amta Railway, Howrah to Sheakhala, Mymensingh– Jamalpur Jagannathganj, Nowakhali, Ranaghat-Krishnagar, Indian Branch Railway Company Nalhati (till 1885), and Calcutta Port Commisioners. All the lines connected hinterland areas of Bengal to port of Calcutta to transport goods and passengers as well.

C. Unassisted Company:

Bengal Provincial Railway was an unassisted company under which Tarekswar Mogra light railway was laid in two phases: 1. Tarekeswar to Mogra and 2. Mogra to Tribeni totaling 33 miles. The significance of this line is it was completely built and run by investing domestic capital and management. The company was registered in 1890 and the line closed in 1956.

D. Native State Line

Cooch Bihar state railway was laid down as native state line in 1892. To fulfill the dream of Maharaja Nripendra Narayan, this narrow guage line was laid down in this region as the begining of a new era in the history of railways. It connected Gitadaha to Cooch Behar. Later it merged with Bengal Assam Railway.⁹

E. Imperial Company

Two lines of the Indian State Railway were important: the Bengal Northern line and the route from Dacca to Narayangunj, which went on to Mymensing. The Dacca State Railway (DSR) was a

⁸ Sanyal, N. (1930). *Development of Indian Railways*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta p. 193

⁹ History of Indian Railway corrected up to 31st March, 1947 by Railway Board, Simla: Government of India Press, p.11

metre gauge (MG) line that was primarily used to transport raw jute up to the inland port of Narayanganj before continuing by river to Calcutta. It was 90 miles (144 km) long. Later it merged with EBR.¹⁰ The state-owned North Bengal Railway was established in 1870 in order to build rail lines in the region. On the Ganges River's northern bank at Sara, work on a metre gauge (MG) line was initiated with the goal of extending the line all the way to Jalpaiguri. A 134.25-mile meter-gauge line was inaugurated on August 28, 1877, connecting Atrai and Jalpaiguri. On January 19, 1878, the line was extended 38.33 miles from Atrai to Sara, and a 12-mile Broad Gauge (BG) line was inaugurated for trade between Poradaha (1023/4 miles from Calcutta) and Damukdiya, opposite Sara, on the Ganges' right bank. The line was expanded from Jalpaiguri to Siliguri (a distance of 23 miles) on June 10, 1878.¹¹

¹⁰[https://railway.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/railway.portal.gov.bd/page/4ec73cd2_6646_426f_ade5_6c05960865d4/INFORMATION%20BOOK%202019%20\(PDF%20Version\).pdf](https://railway.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/railway.portal.gov.bd/page/4ec73cd2_6646_426f_ade5_6c05960865d4/INFORMATION%20BOOK%202019%20(PDF%20Version).pdf) dated 22.1.24

¹¹ Kusari, A. M. (1981). *West Bengal District Gazetteers. Jalpaiguri*. Calcutta: State Editor, West Bengal District Gazetteers.

Table 9: Till 1940, Total opening of line in Bengal by Various Companies

Sl. No	Name of the Company	Opening of Railway Line (in Mile)
A	State Railway:	
1	East Indian Railway	1906.34
2	Bengal Central Railway	2579.31
3	Eastern Bengal Railway	
4	Assam Bengal Railway	
5	Bengal-Nagpur Railway	1522.17
	Total	6007.82
B	Assisted Companies:	
1	Bengal & North-Western Company (1885)	678.85
2	Bengal Doers,	160.00
3	Darjeeling Himalayan Railway	146.51

Sl. No	Name of the Company	Opening of Railway Line (in Mile)
4	Howrah – Amta Railway,	43.87
5	Howrah to Sheakhala,	19.75
6	Mymensingh – Jamalpur Jagannathganj,	51
7	Calcutta Port Commisioners,	208.93
8	Baraset-Bashirhat	52.24
	Total	1361.15
C	Unassisted Company:	
	Bengal Provincial Railway	41.58
	Kalighat Falta Railway	26.25
	Jessore-Jhenidah Railway	36.75
	Bankura Damodar Railway	59.93
	Burdwan-Katwa Bailway	32.47

Sl. No	Name of the Company	Opening of Railway Line (in Mile)
	Total C	196.98
D	Native State line:	
1	Cooch Behar	33
E	Imperial:	
1	Narayanganj – Dacca-Mymensingh, (till 1887)	85.75
	Total	315.73
	Grand Total(A+B+C+D+E)	77914.73

Note: During calculation of expansion of Railway in Bengal, Construction of Railway in Assam before 1874 (Year of division of Aasam from Bengal) and in Bihar and Orissa before 1912 (Year of partition of Bengal and Odissa) is included.